



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE AT FIRE DISASTER SHELTERS

Nurses Provide Basic First Aid, Help People Use Community Resources to Obtain Medical Supplies

The last thing many people think of during a disaster like the San Diego firestorms is health care. But for the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency's 152 public health nurses (PHNs), it's the first thing on their minds.

Teams of PHNs have been deployed to American Red Cross shelters throughout the firestorms, providing services that many don't think about until the dust has settled.

"Many people leave their homes without their medication, glasses, or other medical supplies," said Rose Fox, chief, Public Health Nursing. "PHNs help them use community resources to get what they need."

PHNs also provide basic first aid, and support for those who have experienced a loss, Fox said. They also set up standards in shelters to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, ensure that food is stored safely, and consult with Red Cross staff on health assessments and referrals.

During the San Diego firestorms, PHNs have had to travel many miles to remote locations to reach shelters. Two PHNs assigned to the Julian shelter were sent to the Borrego Springs shelter, then were forced to spend the night when the roads closed, Fox said.

PHNs work in every aspect of public health, including foster care, Adult Protective Services, tuberculosis management and bioterrorism. They make home visits, and provide special education and services to groups such as foster care providers. They also work with community collaborative groups to address community health and social issues.

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Editor's note: The media is invited to interview public health nurses at the Borrego Springs and/or Mountain Empire shelters from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 1. The Borrego Springs shelter is at Borrego Springs High School, 2281 Diegueno Rd. (Thomas Bros. 1058 H1); the Mountain Empire shelter is at Mountain Empire High School, 3305 Buckman Springs Rd., Pine Valley (Thomas Bros. 1296 H3).



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